

above every contemporary. Daudet waged his battle with a quick and slender rapier, Zola brandished a heavy mace — aMn to those redoubtable weapons with which the warriors of mediaeval days beat down the helms of their antagonists.

Some, too, have likened Daudet to an Arab horse, all eagerness and nerves; while Zola has been called a cactus of Provence that had sprouted between the paving-stones of Paris. The great city was his birthplace, and he was proud of it; yet Provence certainly had many claims on him, for there he was conceived, and there, as the following pages will show, he spent the greater part of his childhood under circumstances which exercised no little influence on his disposition, life, and work.